

The context of the new Aggregate norm:

Previously, when selecting a norm group on the GeneSys online platform, there was a 'General Population' norm available. The name of this norm has been changed from 'General Population' to the 'Aggregate Population'. Due to the nature of the data, aggregate population is more appropriate.

The technicalities:

When creating a norm, there are various ways of collecting data. In creating the updated norms, convenience sampling was done, which means that we used the data that were available to us. Specifically, the data from the GeneSys for Windows system were collated with the data from all our clients that have submitted data, for the period up to June 2015. The norm is best described as an aggregate norm when this sampling technique is utilised. This norm contains newer data, and represents a very substantial sample. To ensure the data were useful, the data were processed and 'cleaned' whereby duplicates and demonstration samples, and people who had not completed the entire assessment or subtest were removed, as well as all retests. Additionally, common names may have been removed in this process as we filtered data using Name, Surname, Sex, Age, Education, First Language and Race. In the initial process of merging data from all sources, (the GeneSys for Windows data merged with data from other GeneSys systems), duplicates were also set to be removed. This process has left us with a set of data that we are fairly confident about in terms of content and usefulness.

How to select a norm:

When selecting a norm it is important to consider who the respondent will be compared to, and choose the appropriate norm accordingly.

1. When to use the Aggregate Population norm (previously the General Population norm)

This norm consists of a large number of respondents and enables the individual's score to be compared to a representative average of this specific population. Using this norm enables the practitioner to know where the respondent lies in comparison to (in this context) the general population. Even when the norm is used in different situations, the basis for comparison stays the same. The requirements of the position should be borne in mind when interpreting the scores. It is much more defensible to use the same gauge and appropriately adjust your cut-offs as per various situations.

2. When to use an Indigenous Language or Smaller language group norm

Preferential treatment, to allow fairness for smaller language groups. This norm can be used to avoid discriminating against speakers of indigenous/smaller language groups and allow for potential educational deficits (as may be the case with the Verbal and Numerical subtests), as well as language interference.

3. Occupation Specific norms

These norms are used in specific contexts. They are useful for when the requirements of the job are unknown/assumed/ have not been examined, but the occupation group is known and there is access to a volume of data.

Additional points

Employment Equity

One of the legacies of apartheid is that South Africa is a country characterised by imbalances of distribution of opportunities and resources which permeates all spheres of society. The differences are mostly felt in educational and occupational environment and they still shape the wellbeing and future of the previously oppressed Black majority. One of the mechanisms put in place is Affirmative Action (AA) aimed at correcting the imbalances of the pasts by giving the Black majority an opportunity to advance and develop. However, the inferior quality of education and other factors that resulted from institutionalised discrimination makes it difficult for most Black candidates to meet the requirements. This extends to their ability to perform above the cut-off point on psychometric tests necessary for joining, promotions and attending high profile courses. The situation is aggravated by the bad reputation of psychometric tests in SA, making it difficult for some leaders to accept the result. Some perceive them as tools to frustrate processes such as AA, consequently suggesting the exclusion of psychometric tests in any selection processes.

If an organisation/employer wants to make a special effort to accommodate advancement of previously disadvantaged groups, one way of doing this would be to use a norm group tailored to the biographical background of the candidate. This would mean that you would be comparing English speakers with English speakers or speakers of Indigenous languages to other speakers of Indigenous language, for instance. It needs to be recognised that this may be seen as unfair by people who do not belong to the formerly

disadvantaged groups. It is, however, defensible in terms of the Employment Equity Act. When concessions of this nature are made, it would be advisable for them to be followed up with training and development.

The means and standard deviations for all the norms are available in the documentation for that norm group. In order to make an informed and fair decision, which is fair both to the candidate and to the employing organisation, practitioners are advised to compare the means for the different groups to the Aggregate Norm. To enable them to know how much of a concession they are making in the interest of Affirmative Action.

Biographical data

When creating norms, biographical data is of the utmost importance. Not only is it vital to ensure adequate validity and reliability is present in all demographic groups in South Africa, but it aids in building specific norm groups too. More than simply generating an overall norm group, additional data adds to building other useful norms based around education level, occupation level and language groups. Without this vital information, less information is available for the creation of such norms, which means that less norms are available for use. While it may appear to be time-consuming to fill in biographical data, it is of extreme importance. This also assists in making fair and proper norm selection decisions, for a specific individual.

Importance of using updated norms

Data can be obsolete if it is old enough to no longer reflect the population it is intended to represent. It is therefore in the best interest to use recently updated norms to ensure that candidates are compared to a representative group in order for results to be interpreted in a meaningful way.

Should an organisation want an in-house or specific norm, please feel free to contact us and we would be happy to help you in this regard.